

Ecclesiastic

ARKANSAS PRESBYTERY—CALLED MEETING.

Arkansas Presbytery met in special session in the Central Presbyterian Church, Little Rock, at 10 o'clock a. m., February 23, 1909.

Upon his request the Rev. W. R. Hudson, Ph. D., was dismissed to the Presbytery of Brazos, to accept a call to the Lubbock Street Church, Houston, Texas. The following resolution was adopted: "Resolved, That this Presbytery parts with Rev. W. R. Hudson, late evangelist within our bounds, with much regret, and takes pleasure in bearing testimony to his fidelity and zeal in the discharge of his duties, and commends him to the affection and confidence of the brethren of Brazos Presbytery."

Presbytery adopted the following paper and directed the stated clerk to forward the same to Hon. Robert Bacon, Secretary of State, Washington, D. C.: "Whereas, Rev. W. M. Morrison, D. D., is a member of Arkansas Presbytery; and whereas, he has brought upon himself the hatred of the Belgian government in the Congo Free State in Africa by publicly declaring something of the cruelties and barbarities practiced upon the natives for commercial purposes; and whereas, we are informed that the said Dr. Morrison, our missionary at Luebo, has been arrested for this supposed offence to the Belgian government, and is to be tried for the same, the Presbytery of Arkansas, assembled in the Central Presbyterian Church of Little Rock, Ark., on this, the twenty-third day of February, 1909, petitions and urges upon the Secretary of State of the Government of the United States, to take such action in the use of such means as shall secure to the said Rev. W. M. Morrison, D. D., of Luebo, Congo Free State, Africa, all his just and equitable rights under the treaty, and thereby have the protection of this Government.

"Done in open Presbytery, this 23d day of February, nineteen hundred and nine.

"R. H. Latham, S. C."

SABBATH AND FAMILY RELIGION.

Presbyteries will soon be meeting in spring session, when annual reports will be made and adopted; not the least important of these will be reports on Sabbath and Family Religion. It is earnestly hoped the directions of the Greensboro Assembly as to canvass of congregation in the interest of family worship, preaching and printing sermons and these two all-important subjects, Sabbath and Family Religion, will have been carried out fully and reports made to the several Presbyteries.

The stated clerks are urged to send as promptly as possible the reports adopted by their Presbyteries to the secretary of the Assembly's Committee on Sabbath and Family Religion, Rev. F. D. Jones, Charlotte, N. C.

Chairman.

Charlotte, N. C., Feb. 26, 1909.

THE HOWARD AGNEW JOHNSTON LECTURES.

The faculty of Union Theological Seminary at Richmond extends to our ministers a cordial invitation to attend the special lectures on "Motives and Methods of Personal Work" and "Secrets of Power" to be given by Dr. Howard Agnew Johnston, of Colorado Springs, Col., the distinguished author of "God's Method of Training Workers" and "Bible Criticism and the Average Man." The lectures begin at the seminary on Thursday, March 11, and close on Wednesday, March 17. There will be twelve in all. One of our North Carolina ministers who has heard Dr. Johnston on these practical subjects says that if even fifty pastors can take in these lectures it will result in a quickened spiritual life for all their congregations. On account of the overflowing number of students in the seminary at present it will not be practicable to entertain many of these visiting ministers in the seminary building, but the professors will take pleasure in helping any of them to make convenient and economical arrangements for board in the city.

THE EXACT ISSUE.

By E. C. Gordon.

If it were ever closed, it fell to my lot to re-open the interminable discussion respecting the universal salvation of "incapables." I ask a final hearing prior to the action of our Presbyteries at their approaching meetings.

My statement that no one can find in either Testament a case of any blessing bestowed by God on the incapable child of any unbeliever has been characterized as broad and bold. It is both; but it has not been proved to be inaccurate. The only plausible case cited is that of Jeroboam's child. No one knows how old that child was when he died. No one is authorized to say that his mother was not a believer. God's word clearly indicates that he was not an incapable. See 1 Kings 14: 13. Instead of being "a most probable case," it is not even a probable case.

One principal object I had in reviewing Doctor Webb's book was to show that the inferences he and others draw from what Scriptural data we have that bear on this subject are not "good and necessary consequence," as that phrase is used in our Confession of Faith, and as I understood Doctor Webb to use it, and as I supposed others would understand him. For he quotes the Confession and the Confession asserts that "the whole counsel of God concerning things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture."

Another object was to show that, in view of the lack both of express statement and of good and necessary consequence, it is altogether improper for any Church to assert dogmatically that all incapables are saved.

Doctor Webb has been pleased very kindly and graciously to say that in both these important respects he and I are agreed. There is no issue between us.

One of the accomplished and learned editors of The Presbyterian of the South has recently expressed the same opinion as to this lack of express statement and of good and necessary consequence. I am sure that this opinion is shared by a great many others of our Presbyters and people. Hence I hope, even if we be in a minority, that the majority will not insist on thrusting into our Confession a statement that many of us do not believe is authorized by God's word, however much we hope and believe that it is true.

I can give many more than seven reasons why we hope and, in a sense, believe that all incapables are of the number of God's elect people. The sole reason, and it is all-sufficient, why we should not erect that hope and belief into a dogma, is that God has not authorized us so to do. Adults who die wholly unevangelized, for all practical purposes, are as incapable of exercising saving graces, as infants who die in infancy, or those who are born and die idiots. I know of no reason, except certain inferences drawn from the Scriptures, why these persons may not be elected by God to salvation, and saved by Christ in his own time and way. Some very devout Arminians tell us frankly that God must, if He be just and good, at least give all these people opportunity to hear the gospel and to accept or reject Christ.

Calvinists do not think that either of these opinions can be deduced from God's word by good and necessary consequence. That is, the Scriptures do not authorize us to affirm dogmatically that all these incapable adults are of the number of God's elect, or that God is bound to give them opportunity in a future life to hear the gospel. Men are certainly at liberty to indulge hopes as to the former opinion; for we certainly are not authorized to limit the scope of God's electing love to those who are outwardly called by the ministry of the word. Shall we, then, for the sake of attracting unbelievers to our Church, proclaim this hope as a religious dogma? It would be very effective in many cases. It would put our God in a very favorable aspect before many intelligent and earnest heathen to assure them that their noble and beloved ancestors, who never heard of Christ and who never had a chance either to accept or reject Him, are certainly saved.

As to the ambiguity—and the liability to mislead and to prejudice people—of our Confessional language in Chapter X, Section III: All this can to some extent be removed by adopting the suggestion of Lafayette Presbytery; which is that the language of that section be as follows:

"All elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, where and how He pleaseth."

This statement says what God authorizes His Church to say; no more, no less. It leaves every one free to believe as he pleases, as to the extent of the exercise of God's electing love with respect to incapables of every class.

As to those who believe, and who would insist that every one must believe, that all incapables of every class are of the